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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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April 12, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of Interior
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I write to express my deep disappointment and concern with your recent announcement to support the transportation of grizzly bears into the North Cascades Ecosystem (NCE). Bringing grizzlies to the North Cascades would have grave impacts on my constituents in Washington's 4th Congressional District. Just as my constituents have consistently expressed their steadfast opposition to this proposal, I will continue to stand in opposition to a plan that threatens the way of life in North Central Washington. I opposed this proposal when it was introduced by the previous administration and will continue to do so if the current administration moves forward with this plan.

This proposal flies in the face of the very priorities the Department of Interior claims to espouse: to "restore trust and be a good neighbor." I have previously expressed my profound concerns regarding the process the National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) took in conducting so-called "public forums." One of these forums was held in Okanogan County, and the feedback from the event was nothing short of disturbing. While these sessions were billed as public forums – where residents could learn about the proposal and voice their opinions – many residents were not allowed to express their concerns and were treated in an unacceptable manner by the federal employees conducting the session. In order for the Department of Interior to restore trust and expect to be considered a good neighbor, the Department must ensure the voices of the communities that will be directly impacted by this decision are heard.

The introduction of these apex predators into this area will negatively impact ranchers, recreationists, and rural economies in Central and Eastern Washington. An action as impactful as reintroducing grizzly bears into an ecosystem that is co-inhabited with people and livestock should only be made with sound science and the support of the affected local community members. The last confirmed sighting of a grizzly in the North Cascades was in 1996, and even the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) found that it is "highly unlikely that the area contains a viable grizzly bear population." This

creates serious reservations about the proposal and the facts being used to justify this action.

Furthermore, this proposal is illegal. Washington State law states that grizzly bears "shall not be transplanted or introduced into the state" (RCW 77.12.035, SSB 5106 (1995)). Should you continue to support the introduction of grizzly bears into the North Cascades Ecosystem, I encourage you to consult Washington State law.

Over the past three years, I have been in contact with families, farmers, outdoor recreationists, local elected representatives, and community stakeholders who do not feel their concerns have been taken seriously by federal officials. I recommend you do the same. I would be happy to facilitate such conversations. The federal government must listen to and respect the local communities that will be affected by this plan, and I urge you to take into consideration the negative impacts this plan will have on the constituents of the 4th Congressional District.

I have attached my previous letter to the Superintendent of the North Cascades National Park Service expressing my grave concerns with this proposal. I believe the federal government should defer to the will of state and local communities on species reintroduction issues, and I encourage you to evaluate the need for reintroducing grizzly bears into the NCE, as well as the substantial impacts this action would have on local communities, businesses, and families. Additionally, given the disrespectful manner with which my constituents have been treated, the public comment process must be restarted to allow residents the opportunity to voice their concerns and comment on the proposal in the proper setting.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dan Newhouse", is written over the typed name and title.

Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress